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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to examine the social actions and interactions of students and perceptions about student behavior in the school hallway. A variety of ethnographic methods of data collection were used to interview students (N=52) in grades 3, 4, and 5 in an elementary school in the Southeastern United States. This paper supports the notion that rituals of children are considered expressions of spirituality. Three common ceremonies of children were noted in the hallway; the school line, the cluster, and the phalanx were examples of observed group behavior. Several individual rituals were also noted, such as pole touching; ritual insults; resistance rituals; and rituals denoting affection. Distinctive patterns of the rituals may be related to a variety of variables including gender; ethnicity; region; context; faith; and personality. The many commonalties affirm research assertions that spirituality is inborn. Many child development textbooks continue to ignore the essential role spirituality plays in childhood. (Contains 52 references.) (JDM)

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by
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Rituals in a School Hallway:

Evidence of a Latent Spirituality of Children[1]

Donald Ratcliff, Ph.D.

Spirituality is no longer exclusively a religious phenomenon, but is an aspect of life that is affirmed by people of all faiths, and indeed by those without faith in a transcendent Being. While there has been a strong emphasis upon adult spirituality in recent years, minimal attention has been given to the spirituality of children in North America, with the exception of Coles' (1990) study more than a decade ago.

In contrast, there has been a flowering of interest in children's spirituality internationally. Four years ago this increased concern gave birth to *The International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, which reflects a wide diversity of religions and nationalities of the researchers and the children studied, even though the country where the journal is published--the United Kingdom--is a bit disproportionately represented in the number of articles. In the July, 2000, the editors of the journal hosted the First International Conference on Children's Spirituality at Chichester, U.K., which attracted well over one hundred children's spirituality researchers from many countries of the world.

While there were only a handful of Americans at that conference, one of the plenary speakers was Jerome Berryman who has studied preschool children's spiritual experience for many years in Houston, Texas, and most of the Americans in attendance gave research reports on their work on their side of the Atlantic. There are now plans for two conferences on children's spirituality in the United States, as well some discussion of a scholarly journal and perhaps even a research center devoted to this topic.

The other plenary speaker for the conference was David Hay, who with Rebecca Nye authored what can be considered a seminal book for theory and research related to children's spirituality. *The Spirit of the Child,* was written while Hay served as the director of a spirituality research program at Oxford University, and principal researcher Rebecca Nye currently leads a new initiative in children's spirituality at Cambridge. Hay and Nye's work serves as a theoretical framework for my analysis of rituals as part of an ethnographic study I conducted at an elementary school in North Georgia.

Hay and Nye's Perspective of Children's Spirituality

Spirituality is not to be equated with religion, Hay and Nye assert, although religious *experience* can be one expression of innate spirituality, but certainly not the only expression of this important area of life (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 4). Spiritual experience

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[1] Portions of this article were presented as a session titled "Ceremony and ritual in a school hallway," at the First International Conference on Children's Spirituality, Chichester, U.K., July, 2000, and also a session titled "Rituals in a school hallway: Evidence of a latent spirituality of children," at the Annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies, Athens, Georgia, January, 2001.

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involves a heightened awareness and attentiveness, which can be outgrowth of profound wonder (pp. 9, 31). Spiritual experience, which is thought to have an evolutionary origin (p. 9), is not confined to emotional experience, but is more perceptual in nature (p. 11).

Hay and Nye (pp. 59-74) outline three categories of spiritual sensitivity and provide nine examples of spiritual experience from their research. First is *awareness-sensing*, including the "here-and-now" experience such as meditation sometimes practiced by Buddhists, "tuning" which is an awareness that emerges during aesthetic experience, the intense and undivided concentration that is labeled "flow," and "focusing" which involves a holistic awareness of the body. The second category is *mystery-sensing* and includes the experience of wonder and awe associated with the ultimate mystery of life, or the use of active imagination that transcends everyday experience. The third category of spiritual sensitivity is *value-sensing*, as expressed in delight or despair related to ideas of worth or value, a sense of ultimate goodness and trust in life, and the quest for ultimate meaning and identity related to that meaning. Using grounded theory methodology in their interviews with school-aged children, Hay and Nye (pp. 112-114) came to conclude that the core category related to children's spirituality is "relational consciousness," the first term denoting the heightened awareness, reflection, and perceptiveness associated with children's spirituality, and the second term designating the context of spirituality: relationships to things, people, self, or a divine Being.

Hay and Nye emphasize that spiritual awareness is a component of moral behavior, and the neglect or suppression of the child's natural spirituality is a likely contributor to the lack of moral awareness and consequent lack of social concern for others (pp. 38-39). They suggest that a lack of concern for the spiritual nurture of children results in meaninglessness, which in turn can be expressed in violence, drug abuse, and corruption (pp. 36-37). There are important political implications for spirituality education that fosters a concern for others, a respect for justice, and concern for the physical environment. The moral imperative related to spirituality can result in a loss of prejudice and a decrease in materialism (pp. 17-18). One may extend their argument and suggest that some antisocial activities, such as violence, suicide, bullying, and drug-use, reflect a negative spirituality, or what Jerome Berryman (2001) terms "pseudo-play."

How a Study of a School Hallway Became a Study of Children's Rituals

In the Spring of 1994 I observed and interviewed children in the upper elementary hallway of a public school in the Southeastern United States. Using field notes, videotape, cassette tapes, photographs, and artifacts, I examined the activities, conversations, and perspectives of children, to gain an understanding of how they experience this area of the school. About 700 children, ages five to twelve, passed through the main hallway at some point during the day, but I chose to interview 52 youngsters in third, fourth, and fifth grades (ages nine to eleven). My goal was to understand the social actions and interactions of these youngsters and the perspectives they shared about the hallway and school contexts; using a wide variety of ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis. After four months of gathering data in the

hallway and interviewing the children, I had collected approximately 116 hours of video data, more than 30 hours of audio tape, and hundreds of pages of field notes.

This study (Ratcliff, 1995a; 2000a; 2000b) yielded many findings, but I concentrated on an analysis of three social formations that regularly appeared in the hallway. One formation is the *school line*--a single-file arrangement that functions to move children from one place to another and maintain control over children, in contrast with the *queue*, which designates priority of service. The second formation is the *phalanx* in which two or more children walk side-by-side down the hallway, engaging in verbal and/or non-verbal interaction as they walk. The third social formation is the *cluster*, a gathering of children in a circular or semi-circular formation, also marked by verbal and/or nonverbal interaction. These social formations and children's understandings of them were interpreted within several theoretical frameworks, including Herbert Blumer's social interactionism, Edward T. Hall's proxemic theory, and school culture versus child/peer culture theory. Extended consideration of these three social formations, as well as details of the methodology used, are considered in detail in my dissertation (Ratcliff, 1995a).

Analyses Subsequent to My Dissertation Study

Soon after the completion of my dissertation work, I conducted further analysis of my data on a topic mentioned peripherally in my dissertation, ritualistic behavior. I then gave a short conference presentation on the topic (Ratcliff, 1995b). Over the next five years a number of my students at The University of Georgia and Toccoa Falls College reviewed my research videos, as provided for in the school and parental release forms. These were always voluntary assignments for my students, as reasonably similar alternative assignments were permitted. In some cases, my students were given very general instructions regarding the data analysis to be conducted with the videos, and in other cases my students specifically were asked to identify ritualistic actions of students, subsequent to their reviewing a definition of rituals and being given several examples from my earlier work. A wide variety of rituals were described in these student assignments, some of them converging with what I had observed earlier, but also four new categories of rituals emerged.

It should be noted that the original research focused on the three social formations--now termed ceremonies--and thus there is greater certainty regarding children's understandings of the three ceremonies. These were discussed in the interviews as well as observed by the researcher. In contrast, the phases of the ceremonies and individual rituals are primarily the result of *ex post facto* analysis and thus were not discussed with the children. Consequently these aspects of the study are more tentative; they reflect etic constructions of a researcher who attempted to be emic to children's experiences, but fell short of completely entering their world. Thus these are tentative categories and hypotheses that may need revision as they are considered in future research.

A Change of Focus

During the fall of 1999 I was asked to participate in a think tank for planning research strategies for a program titled "Children in Worship," coordinated by Shirley Morgenthaler at Concordia University. As part of my preparation I chose to read *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation*, edited by Shirley Morgenthaler, and *The Spirit of the Child* by David Hay with Rebecca Nye. These sources emphasize the importance of rituals in children's spirituality and I began to realize that a focus on ritual was more resonant, congruent, and even isomorphic to nearly all of my original data. Each of the three social formations identified in my original work--the line, the phalanx, and the cluster--could be understood as a series of rituals related to a common purpose. The term that appeared to provide the best fit with this series of related rituals was "ceremony."

As I continue to examine and reflect upon my research data, it seemed very apparent that ritualistic activities and the more complex combination of rituals designated ceremonies are axial categories, or perhaps even core categories, as these are defined in constant comparison data analysis procedures (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). I had explicitly stated in my dissertation that I did not seek such categories (Ratcliff, 1995, p. 95), yet there they were. It amazed me that I had used theoretical bases that ignored spirituality, at a site that is manifestly secular, developed field notes that overlooked most of the indications of spirituality in the children I studied, and even wrote and successfully defended a dissertation with only marginal comments on what appears to be the central topic. I was genuinely astonished.

I contacted my major professor, a widely respected specialist in qualitative research, to ask if other qualitative researchers experienced similar revelations of new axial and core categories, years after the original research. She assured me that my experience was not unique; indeed waiting for the emergence of axial and core categories may have been the reason that early ethnographers usually spent two or more years in the field prior to presenting their results.

For the last nine months, I have explored this insight with the help of some of my students who have assisted me in examining the data. At this point I have come to conclude that the concept of ritualistic behavior explains more of the research data than did my original designation "social formations." Indeed, the original designation—included even in the title of my dissertation—now seems fairly vague, and emphasized the outward appearance of the three varieties of groups children form. In the interviews with children, I found that they were much less impressed with the outward appearances, insisting that the phalanx and cluster were the same social events, even though their outward appearances--side-by-side versus circular--were quite different, and their degree of mobility--moving versus stationary--usually differed as well. Their commonality, the children insisted, was the friendship and relative freedom implied; they were *spontaneous* ceremonies that reflected the transcendent values of friendship and freedom. In contrast, the children had told me the school line reflected the teacher's transcendent values of order and control, and thus were *imposed* ceremonies.

Theoretical Base and the Research Site

Defining rituals is difficult because the term is used in a variety of ways. While many sources, such as Morgenthaler's book (1999), emphasize the religious context of rituals, others such as Goffman (1967) include everyday greetings and interactive patterns as being rituals. Bell (1997, p. 138) attempts to distinguish special activities that are unusual, from more ordinary daily routines, designating the former to be "rituals" and the latter to be "ritual-like activities." Rituals and ritual-like activities can convey a wide variety of messages and attitudes, connecting a person's immediate existence with more distant sources of authority, power, and value (Bell, 1997, p. xi).

Erik Erikson (1977, pp. 89-90) describes *ritualization* in the genesis of children's play, highlighting the role of the "numinous"--a sense of hallowed presence—that assures the participant of separateness being transcended. The numinous is thought to be related to the pre-conceptual Ultimate Background Object (UBO) which is a precursor to the God concept in infants (Smith, 1985; 1988; also see Ratcliff, 1992), and related to the differentiation of self and other (Moseley and Brockenbrough, 1988). The concept of the numinous is similar to Hay and Nye's (1998, p. 59) emphasis upon a distinctive level of consciousness, a state of heightened perceptual involvement, which is at the heart of children's spirituality, and involves three basic themes: 1) awareness-sensing, 2) mystery-sensing, and 3) value-sensing.

The perspective of ritual used in the present study falls somewhere between the general concept of Goffman's greeting rituals, and the restrictive sense of religious and/or anthropological ritual as used by Morgenthaler and Bell. Many of the activities considered to be rituals in this study might be considered "ritual-like" or "ritualization," yet the designation of "ritual" seems appropriate as it is more restrictive than Goffman's broader sense of the term. In our use of "ritual," the experience of awe and an implicit transcendence are highlighted, as emphasized by Erikson, Morgenthaler, and other writers. Erickson (1977, p. 78) also emphasizes ritual as a means of deepening community and perspective, an aspect not considered in detail in the present analysis, but possibly worth exploring in the future. The working concept of ritual used in the present analysis is adapted from the above sources and sociological theory: a ritual is an action, usually repeated but sometimes occurring only once in a lifetime, that signifies some transcendent meaning and is associated with a sense of awe, mystery, and/or a heightened level of consciousness.

Ritual and rite have been considered in detail by scholars of cultural studies (Bell, 1997). Van Gennep (1960, pp. 15-24) describes the formalities required for crossing the border from one geographical region to another, such as customs clearance when going to another country. Throughout history, territorial boundaries are clearly marked, and often there is a neutral zone between countries, an area considered by van Gennep to be a place of "wavering between two worlds," what Victor Turner (1969) calls "liminality." Once rites of passage were performed, the individual could pass through the neutral zone to another territory or region.

At the school I studied, the place of "wavering between two worlds" is the hallway. The classroom is a location that emphasizes "school culture," marked by formality, routine, submission to adults, and adult values. The playground, and to some extent other areas outside the school, emphasize "peer culture" or "child culture," marked by play, multiple options, peer norms and values, and flexibility (Baker, 1985; Fine, 1981; Sutton-Smith, 1982, 1990). The hallway is a more or less neutral zone between these two cultures. At times, expressions of school culture predominate in the hallway, as when school lines snake their way to and from classrooms and other areas of the school building. At other times expressions of peer culture predominate, denoted by the presence of phalanxes and clusters. Occasionally there is a mixture of both school and peer cultures; all three varieties of groups can exist simultaneously. *Wavering* between the two worlds of peer culture and school culture is a particularly apt descriptor for the hallway context: I found it to be constantly shifting between these variations.

Passage between territories, as described by van Gennep, is restricted and requires permission. Likewise, at the school I studied, the main entryways to the school were near the principal's and assistant principal's offices. Large windows allowed administrators to monitor who entered and left the building. Similarly, Johnson (1982) describes "guardians of the complex" who carefully monitor and control access to school buildings. In addition, the entryway from the central section of the school to the upper elementary hallway, has a sign, ostensibly for parents, stating the earliest time a child can be picked up after school. The entryway to each classroom also was marked by a sign, noting the teacher's name and grade level, thus denoting the authority of the teacher over that school space and the students that are permitted access.

Other writers have also described ritualistic aspects of schools. Jackson (1990, pp. 6-8) compares the rituals of church to classroom rituals such as children raising hands to speak in class and rituals related to scheduling of activities. Similarly Erickson (1982) compares aspects of school lessons to a Roman Catholic mass, and Merritt (1982, pp. 227-228) describes the ritual closure of class discussions and deference to a powerful Other—teachers and administrators—within the school context. The school day is punctuated by "ritual oaths and songs" such as the pledge of allegiance to the American flag and singing "America," notes Gracey (1993). Youngsters perform rituals of resistance to counteract the teaching rituals of teachers, comments McLaren (1993, pp. 145-179), while the teacher issues forms of "ritual humiliation" to enforce classroom norms (Sitton, 1980). McLaren (p. 16) also compares the teacher's role to that of a priest, while Herrera (1988, p. 16) denotes activities in the school he studied as "pastoral care" in contrast to active education. Johnson (1982) considers the signs outside the school building, large spaces around schools, and other architectural components of the school landscape as setting it apart from surrounding territories. This "sacred space," crowned by a flagpole rather than a cathedral spire, is dotted by icons of accomplishment, the drawings and test papers hung in the hallway (the school I studied even had a steeple-like structure on the roof). Often the school is considered to have the power to redeem a culture from its ills by influencing children, Reitman (1992) concludes in the book *The Educational Messiah Complex*. One might ask, "Has the school become a secular church, encouraging belief in, affirmation of, and devotion to selected social values, and cultivating devotion to

education as a means of healing for the problems of society?" Perhaps some school practices are examples of "implicit religion," a topic of emerging interest in the United Kingdom, David Hay tells me in personal correspondence.

Three Ceremonies

Hundreds of times each day, *every* day school was in session, I saw three ceremonies take place in the school hallway. I use the term "ceremonies" not only because they constituted a series of rituals, but also because there tended to be a common referent implicit in the performance. In general, the ceremonies involved the cooperation of several people, while individualized rituals could generally be performed without the cooperation of others. Many variations or "improvisations" took place within the ceremonies. It should be noted that while transcendence is inferred for these rituals, this is often implicit in children's comments, and that the sense of awe or reverence was not always mentioned. As noted earlier, this may call for some tentativeness in the designation "ritual," at least until further studies can confirm or disconfirm the presence of awe and sense of transcendence by participation in these ceremonies.

The School Line.

The first ceremony to be considered, the school line, can be distinguished from the "queue" in which people either visibly or symbolically wait in a prioritized manner (Schwartz, 1975; Mann, 1985; Hall, 1991). The school line, in contrast, functions to move children from one place to another in a highly structured and controlled manner. These kinds of lines are relatively rare in adult life, most likely to be found in prisons, mental hospitals, and the military (Goetz, 1975, p. 248). Both queues and lines occur in school contexts; I often observed lines moving from classrooms to the cafeteria, at which point they became queues determining the order in which children were served lunch. I also saw drinking fountain queues. Lining and queuing are learned during the first days of the child's school experience (Cox, 1980, pp. 37-39; Thorne, 1993, pp. 30-31). The purpose of school lines is clearly control of children by the teacher as well as minimization of noise, running, and other potentially disturbing behavior.

Five phases regularly occurred in the progression of lines that moved from one location to another in the school, constituting five rituals of whole class movements between territories or boundaried areas, as youngsters move through the hallway "neutral zone," to use van Gennep's designation. The phases are regularities observed, not absolute requirements; variations and omissions of phases occurred frequently. The phases are derived from my observations and the related literature (LeCompte, 1974; Beresin, 1993).

Phase 1: The Calling. The ritual or rituals involved in the formation of the line vary widely, including alphabetical order, sequence of birthdays, color of clothes, and priority as a reward for previous behavior (Thorne, 1993, pp. 40-41; Best, 1983, p. 20; Goetz, 1975, pp. 160, 207). Usually the teacher gives the children a verbal or non-verbal cue for the line to form. This may involve the ritual closure of the current classroom activity,

such as "Put away your arithmetic books," or a partial closure of that activity, such as "When you finish your math, you may raise your hand and get in line."

While teachers often think of position in line being a reward, many—though not all—of the students I interviewed felt differently. When I asked nine-year-old boys: "Where would you like to be in line?," they at first preferred the middle of the line, so they could talk more. Then they changed their minds and preferred the end of the line. Why?

> [Fred]: You can talk more.
> [Dave]: And the teacher can't see ya. Kissin' your girlfriend at the back of the line, teacher won't see ya.
> [Ray]: Play around. The teacher can't see, so you can talk or wrestle in the back of the line.

Eleven-year-old girls emphasized their desire to avoid embarrassment:

> [DR]: Where in line would you most like to be?
> [Jodi]: That's hard. The back.
> [DR]: Why?
> [Jodi]: 'Cause we don't know where to go or something, and if you're in front you go too far. Can follow the leader from the back . . .
> [DR]: Would you want to be in the front when you go outside to play, or in the back?
> [Jodi]: In the back.
> [DR]: Why?
> [Jodi]: So they don't look at you. Or talk to you. You'll get in trouble.
> [Dena]: So they don't call you names.

Thus the assumption that being near the front of the line is always considered a reward did not fit most of the students I studied, although some *did* desire to be at the front of the line.

Phase 2: The Silence. After the line is formed, usually inside the classroom, the teacher cued children to depart. This cue was often delayed by a demand for silence prior to leaving the room. This requirement, as well as other strict rules related to lines—children listed 17 rules related to lines, in addition to a much longer list of hallway rules—clearly indicates that teachers imposed the lining up ritual, whatever form it took, as a means of control. Children clearly reflected that understanding of control. When I asked ten-year-old girls about their feelings in line, they told me,

> [Kim]: I get anxious to get there.
> [Sandy]: I feel rotten.
> [Tammy]: I get in trouble. I get mad.

Children could feel alienated from the self in line, as represented by one African American girl who told me, "Ain't in line if teacher gone; be my own self." Most children did not like lines, but a few emphasized the greater safety and sanctuary with friends when in line.

Phase 3: The Departure. After the line had formed and silence obtained—usually in the classroom, but occasionally in the hallway—the teacher would cue the children to begin moving down the hallway. The prototype of this phase of the ceremony is a group of children, arranged in a straight, single-file manner, quiet and uniform, with children walking slowly to the destination. Teacher control tended to be higher at this phase than later phases.

Phase 4: The Procession. Once outside the classroom door, the line progresses--usually without interruption--to the destination. It is during this phase that many of the ritual requirements of lines described by children are particularly relevant: no talking, hands by the side, facing the front, stay in line order, staying reasonably close to the person in front of you, and an assortment of other rules that all reflected adult control. When lines approximated the ideal, the solemnity could be eerie. At one point in my research, I watched a silent line move down the hallway and noted that the procession reminded me of an old movie with a title something like, "The Night of the Living Dead." As I look at the videos of such moments, I now think of a funeral procession, or perhaps a very solemn part of church liturgy.

In contrast with the prototype, I sometimes observed lines that were uneven and occasionally children would playfully punch one another, talk quietly, and even move into a phalanx position (side-by-side). When permitted, children added their own improvisations to the line. Were they more content with lines when variations were permitted? I suspect so, although I did not ask them about it, but I doubt if they enjoyed lines—even with some latitude--as much as the other ceremonies I observed.

Phase 5: The Benediction. Subsequent to the fourth phase of moving through the hallway was a final ritual, bringing closure to the line ceremony. When students moved from one classroom to another, this closure was often delayed by the need to wait for other students to leave the destination classroom. Lines going to lunch became queues once they arrived at the cafeteria. Lines of children going outside generally dispersed one-by-one as each child passed through the hallway doors. The most obvious change as children came to this fifth ritual phase was the abandonment of line order and the forming of phalanxes or individualized activities. The ceremony was completed, the imposition of line rules were suspended, and children returned to their customary behavior at the destination. This could vary from exuberance in physical education class, to semi-exuberance in the cafeteria, to general quietness if entering another classroom. In the latter context the benediction often involved two sub-phases: a silence prior to entering the classroom, as the class waited outside the classroom door, followed by the silent entry and movement of children to their respective seats.

The five phases/rituals of the school line are distinctive from most, if not all, of the other rituals and ceremonies observed in the hallway because of the rather strict rules that were imposed by teachers. When there were no teachers present, lines rarely formed. When lines existed in the teacher's absence, it was usually because a child was designated as a teacher proxy who informed the teacher of peer activities. Only once in the four months

did I see children spontaneously form a line, and that was when several girls played "lining up" in the hallway.

The Phalanx and Cluster

Two other ceremonies were frequently observed in the school hallway, and at key times during the day were even more common than the school line. The phalanx and cluster are very distinctive in outward appearance, yet very similar in terms of social function and meaning to children.

The phalanx, in which children walk side-by-side down the hallway, is very common in the everyday life of children and adults, and yet there is almost no literature that has examined this social formation. David Hay, in personal correspondence, has wondered if perhaps the phalanx represents a Jungian archetype. From external observation the complexity of this phenomenon is apparent—children must coordinate their speed of movement to match the person walking next to them, while simultaneously maintaining communication either verbally—by talking with one another—or non-verbally by occasional eye contact, smiles, or other communication. I found that phalanxes in a school hallway varied from two persons to a half dozen or more, the latter spanning the entire width of the hallway.

In contrast the cluster is a group of at least two children, usually in a circular or semi-circular arrangement, that generally does not move but rather is stationary at some location in the hallway, most often between the origination point of the first child and a presumed destination. The cluster tends to last longer than the phalanx, I found, and occasionally a phalanx will become a cluster or vice versa. School lines were more likely to become phalanxes than clusters, and usually this shift occurred only when the teacher was either lenient or not watching the children carefully.

While the external differences between phalanxes and clusters impressed me as an observer, these external distinctions were minimized by children. One group, for example, decided to give their own name for the phalanx, "buddy talking." They continually used that phrase to designate this kind of grouping during the entire interview regarding phalanxes. In the subsequent interview with this group, they immediately identified the cluster also as "buddy talking" and equated the two kinds of groupings. I found that nearly all of the groups of children similarly equated them. I am reminded of Piaget's emphasis upon preschoolers being misled by external appearances, in contrast with the conservation of school-aged youngsters; I was reminded of my outsider status by the fact that I was so impressed with external appearances during my early observations, while children—the insiders to childhood—saw beyond the appearances. After the children pointed out the commonalities between phalanxes and clusters, I too could see the similarities. Indeed, the same four to five phases exist in both ceremonies.

Phase 1: The Signal. Initially children see one another and make some indication of interest, such as a smile, a raised hand, calling out to the other person, or some other

expression. The signal was not always readily observable in the videotape data because it tended to be subtle, perhaps to avoid undesired attention from other children or teachers.

Phase 2: The Approach. This is usually followed by either one person walking toward the other, or both walking toward one another. In the few instances when two people walked up to one another without an initial greeting, I probably missed some subtle expression of interest.

Phase 3: Engagement. Once the two or more children form a group, they either continued walking toward their destination in a phalanx, or they form a cluster and begin talking. Communication between two or more children was considered a requirement for a group to be designated either a cluster or phalanx in my study, but there were occasions when no interaction occurred between two children walking side-by-side. I presumed the phalanx-like arrangement was just an accidental arrangement, but since this was not discussed in the group interviews I cannot be certain of this conclusion.

I randomly selected 44 phalanxes and clusters from my videotape data for detailed analysis. In every case these groupings were single-sex gatherings, either all boys or all girls. I do recall observing mixed sex groupings from my other observations, but they are comparatively rare. Girls' phalanxes and clusters were about twice as frequent as boys' groups in my sample, probably—I was told by both boys and girls in interviews—because teachers are more likely to tolerate girls' groupings and misbehavior.

What meaning did children infuse in the phalanx and cluster? They very consistently linked these ceremonies with friendship. Consider the comments of a nine-year-old girl:

> [DR]: If you thought about being in a row [my designation for a phalanx], what would it mean to you?
> [Jamie]: Feels goooooooood!
> [DR]: Feels good, ok. But what does it mean to you?
> [Jamie]: If you're in a row with friends, it probably means you *have* friends.

Similar feelings were expressed by a nine-year-old girl regarding the cluster, "Your friends in the circle [her designation for a cluster] could cheer you up." An eleven-year-old girl similarly stated, "It's cool . . . you get to talk, it's a reason to be with your friends." Children also emphasized freedom from control in such groups. Consider the comments of an African American ten-year-old girl regarding the cluster: "I be happy and free. No teachers 'round, so I say what I want to." However, children admitted that such groupings were not always pleasant. "Anything can happen: fighting, cussing, laughing . . . talking about someone, pushing," an eleven-year-old girl informed me.

Phase 4: The Benediction. At some point in the process, children involved in the phalanx or cluster would mark the need to end the ceremony. This might be due to one or more participants noting the time, coming to the termination point in the phalanx, teacher directive, or other indication that termination was required. This was sometimes, though not always, accompanied by saying "goodbye," waving, or making some other indication that the ritual had terminated.

Phase 5: Separation. Phalanxes generally separated at the destination, although at times they became clusters and thus the fourth and fifth phases did not apply until the termination of the cluster. When a cluster involved more than two children, it was common that children left sequentially rather than all at once. There may be significance in the phased withdrawal from the ceremony, but the significance was not apparent in the video data, and this remains to be explored in future research.

Thus four to five phases—rituals, if you will—of both of these ceremonies are very similar, yet there *are* external distinctions, and children often discussed the negative behavior associated with clusters, but were less likely to associate misbehavior with phalanxes. I noted that phalanxes usually where short-term, while clusters usually lasted longer (unless ended by a teacher). Yet, in spite of these differences, children were more impressed with the commonalities of the two ceremonies: they both represented friendship and freedom. The school line was imposed by teachers, while clusters and phalanxes were child-initiated. There were degrees to which teachers insisted on line rules, and degrees of tolerance by teachers for clusters and phalanxes. Yet clearly the line ceremony reflected a consistent point of reference or transcendence—it was an expression of school culture and the corresponding expression of the power of teachers over children. In contrast phalanxes and clusters consistently had their reference point in friendship and child/peer culture—their transcendent meaning was located in the autonomy of the youngsters that initiated them.

Individual Rituals

While the three ceremonies were the most consistent groupings of rituals observed, a wide variety of other spontaneous rituals were observed. As noted previously, caution must be exercised, as these activities were not discussed with children in the interviews; they were a tangential aspect of the original study, and some of them were identified from videotapes after the completion of the original study. Awe and conceptual transcendence may or may not have been present, thus it is not certain whether these should be designated rituals or ritualistic.

Rituals Noted During the Original Research

Several ritualistic activities were briefly described in my dissertation. These included touching or rubbing rituals, avoidance rituals, ritual insults, resistance rituals, and rituals denoting affection.

Pole Touching. In the hallway studied, each classroom had a small entryway, just outside the door, shared by another classroom. In the middle of this entryway was a large pole which apparently functioned as a roof support. Twelve of the classrooms thus made up six entryways with poles. These poles were regularly touched, rubbed, banged, climbed, and given other kinds of attention throughout the study. As I observed these activities, I thought of the actions as ritualistic. It may be that some of the pole touching reflected boredom, as children waited outside the classroom, but the touches children made as they entered the classroom was not unlike the touching of a mezuzah on the doorway of

Jewish families, or the ritual touch of a saint's portrait as practiced by some Roman Catholics. In a sense the pole delineates the boundary of the hallway and classroom; perhaps the touching is a territorial ritual, such as those noted in history by van Gennep (1960). In my interviews with children, their general dislike for teacher-imposed rules and the comparative freedom sometimes possible in the hallway, makes me wonder if perhaps the pole-touching was an affirmation of the boundaries of absolute teacher control—an action of respect to a physical symbol of the boundaries of control. Of course, teachers had authority in the hallway, but that authority was shared with other teachers, and when teachers had to choose between authority in the classroom and authority in the hallway, they usually chose the former. Thus touching the pole perhaps reflected the transcendent value of freedom in the hallway to children.

Doorway Touching. The hallway had two doors at each end, one set of doors leading to the outside of the building, the other two opening to a central area of the school. Frequently boys jumped and touched the top of these openings. Both girls and boys often stopped talking momentarily as they passed through the doors. This was in part because the doorways were only wide enough to accommodate one child at a time—lines passed through them without interruption, but phalanxes had to momentarily break up to go through the doors. Again the touching and momentary silence may reflect territoriality, as children entered or exited "their" hallway to exit or enter the common area near the principal's office, or to exit or enter the outside world.

Wall Rubbing. Hundreds of times each day I noticed children rubbing the walls of the hallway as they walked in the hallway or stood waiting to enter a classroom. There were many variations of wall touching, including single finger rubbing, palm rubbing, head rubbing, elbow rubbing, buttocks rubbing, full body rubbing, and so on. At times the rubbing of the wall almost seemed obscene. What meanings, if any, do children give to such activities? Again, I can only speculate based upon my interviews about other hallway activities, but I suspect the wall was respected as a barrier between the classroom and the hallway, and perhaps the rubbing symbolically affirmed the separation between the world of teacher control in the classroom, and the area of "wavering between two worlds," the hallway.

Ritual Contamination/Avoidance. One classroom entryway in the hallway was considered by many children to be "taboo space;" the entryway mentally disabled and learning disabled children entered for part of the school day. I regularly noticed children moving from that side of the hallway to the middle to avoid being too close to the entryway, although this was not always the case. One child, who attended a class in this special area, crawled on the floor to avoid being videotaped entering that area. What transcendent meaning might be reflected by such avoidance activities? I suspect these actions affirm the desire to be normal and to avoid being labeled abnormal. Children may have realized that they could be mistaken for participants in remedial classes. It may be that children with poor self-esteem, or with marginal performance, avoided these areas more than other children—a hypothesis that awaits further testing.

Ritual Insults. Children regularly teased one another in the hallway. I spoke briefly with children about these activities during my interviews, and the children seemed as puzzled as I was about the insults. They readily acknowledged that to make an insult was to invite a return insult. I sensed in children's comments that there was a competitive component to ritual insults. For example an eleven-year-old boy called himself the "king of cut downs," and provided me with an example: "Your mother's so fat that she fills both sides of the family." There are varieties of teasing indigenous to African American males, termed "meddlin" and "playing the dozens" (Hanna, 1982; Hale-Benson, 1982; Heath, 1982). Yet ritual insults were not specific to African American males in the school I studied, and even the "king of cut downs" was a Euro-American male. Perhaps the transcendent meaning is to negate affirmations of superiority by others (Davies, 1982, pp. 93-100), or perhaps to affirm one's own superiority to others. I am still puzzled by children's ritual insults.

Rituals of Resistance. Peter McLaren (1993, pp. 145-179) describes what he terms "rituals of resistance," actions by children to resist the authority of teachers. The children I observed sometimes resisted teacher authority when they disobeyed line rules; adding their own improvisations to the lines, engaged in rough and tumble play, ran in the hallway, or engaged in other misbehavior. Children tend to see such activities as normal exuberance, while teachers may think such actions are symptoms of hidden problems (Lancy, 1993, pp. 62, 64). Rituals of resistance may point to the transcendent value of child/peer culture for children reflecting the desire to be free from the constraints of adult control.

Affection Rituals. Elementary aged children generally do not express affection for opposite sex peers (Oswald, Krappman, Chowdhuri, & von Salisch, 1987), although one researcher observed boys and girls of this age surreptitiously kissing one another in the hallway (Best, 1983, pp. 114-115). While some of the boys I interviewed talked about kissing girls, I never observed this in the hallway. However, I did observe teasing and touching between girls and boys, which may be socially acceptable forms of disguised latent affection at this age. I have noticed similar teasing and touching between adolescents in a dating relationship. I observed affectionate behavior between girls, such as holding hands and placing arms around one another. In my observations of younger elementary aged children, such affection is common by both girls and boys, and between boys and girls at earlier ages, but by the mid elementary years—about age nine or ten—most of the overt affection is between girls. I recall some of the boys in the groups I interviewed commenting that only those who are gay would express such affection to the same sex, but I also wonder if the rough and tumble play I observed between boys could be considered a masculinized affection. Unlike several other researchers, I observed girls occasionally engaging in rough and tumble play, generally girls who belonged to racial or ethnic minorities, or Euro-American girls who were less popular or possibly lower class. Affection rituals indicate the importance of touching to humans (Montagu, 1986), affirming the transcendent value of being loved, accepted, and appreciated.

Rituals Noted in Subsequent Analyses[2]

As part of two undergraduate classes I taught—in Spring, 1997 and Spring, 2000--several students elected to analyze video data collected during the hallway study, within the parameters established by permission forms. Students were each given a two-hour videotape recorded during my research, then given instructions on how to analyze the video, and provided with one or more examples of rituals I had observed during the study. I encouraged them to discover additional rituals, and describe them in some detail.

Combining the analyses of my students, four general categories of rituals emerged as I attempted to summarize and categorize their efforts. As might be expected, students did not always carefully distinguish between general actions of children and ritualistic activities, in part because the term "ritual" is a bit vague and is used in very different ways by various writers, as has been noted previously.

Drinking Rituals. While the hallway I studied was videotaped from many positions in the hallway, I found that the widest variety of activity occurred at the end of the hallway near restrooms and drinking fountains. My students were impressed with the rituals associated with students drinking water, and two suggested a sequence of actions that--combined--consisted of: 1) queuing, 2) bending, 3) drinking, 4) looking around, 5) either drinking again, touching another person, or walking away. My students were impressed with the uniformity of this sequence, and how often children would repeat steps 3 and 4; it was unusual that a child would simply drink from the fountain and then depart. Variations on the sequence included a boy that flapped his arms like a bird as he approached the fountain, hands being clasped as they approached the fountain (almost as a person might fold their hands in prayer as they go forward for the eucharist), and a youngster who made a side entry to the fountain, rubbing the wall as he approached the water. Several children took a drink, left the fountain, then returned for another drink, left, and returned again. At least one child drank with his head tilted sideways to monitor other activity in the hall as he drank.

While using the restroom is more likely to be considered a legitimate reason for leaving the classroom, either getting a drink is considered an appropriate reason for leaving the classroom or perhaps children ask to use the restroom and stop for a drink instead. On some occasions children do both. The rituals associated with drinking may point to the reverence children have for any activity that permits escape from the high control associated with the classroom (Carere, 1987). Of course children may be vigilant as they drink because of fear that others will dunk their heads in the water, or that their teacher will see them, although neither of these were observed by my students or me during the research.

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Walking/Dancing Rituals. Children often chose to walk in an unusual manner, particularly when teachers were not around, and often the walking became either an individual or dyadic dance. Occasionally children would walk backwards or sideways as they moved down the hallway. On at least one occasion, two girls were observed walking heel to toe as they progressed slowly down the hallway together. Children often joyfully skipped, jumped, and even hopped in the hallway, often immediately after leaving the classroom. One student noted two children—gender is uncertain—that danced together in the hallway, while on another occasion a child performed what seemed like "a Polynesian dance." Other variations include dances apparently unique to boys: strutting with arms and body moving in rhythm with steps, walking with "spasms," and balancing books on the head. The message of these rituals seems to be the affirmation of child culture and the comparative freedom of the hallway in contrast to the high control of the classroom, although they may also reflect—like many hallway rituals—sheer boredom.

Athletic/Sports Rituals. Children, usually boys, often pretended or actually engaged in activities that reflected an interest in athletics and other recreational/sporting activities. Boxing, with punches into the air or sometimes touching another child, was not infrequent. On at least one occasion children engaged in the pretense of fencing, while actual or pretended wrestling and other forms of rough and tumble play also occurred. Youngsters—usually boys, but not exclusively boys—often pretended to play basketball, shooting at imaginary hoops, usually above the doorways to the inner section of the building. Youngsters played baseball or catch with water cups that were tossed into the air. Kids also threw shirts, book bags, and pencils as substitutes for balls. Children pretended to lift weights, engaged in cross-country skiing, walked on an invisible balance beam, kicked an imaginary football, played soccer with a paper wad, and engaged in drag strip/racing games. Youngsters often pretended to fire guns at one another, towards classrooms, and sometimes the video camera.

What is the message of all these rituals? Perhaps it is obvious that youngsters enjoy playing and pretending, even at the later elementary years, but the frequent activity related to sports suggests a longing to excel in this area. For example, the "slam/dunk shooting of hoops" in the hallway may reflect a child's aspiration to be a basketball star, and perhaps such a youngster imagines a crowd observing and cheering for him. The transcendent meaning of these rituals may be children's hope for future stardom. But I suspect the common athletic pretense in the hallway may also be an indication that children sense the need for a recess period. Perhaps the high number of such activities in the hallway I studied was a consequence of the lack of recess. In addition to the adverse classroom effects of discontinuing recess (Blatchford, 1998; Pellegrini, 1995), perhaps much of the energy once expended on the playground is now expended in the school hallway. This is at least a hypothesis to explore in future research.

Acting Rituals. A final category of rituals observed by my students emphasized performance or acting before a real or imaginary audience. In many cases the athletic/sports rituals in the previous section could also be included here. Sometimes children appeared to perform before an imaginary audience, sometimes they were performing for the camera or possibly the researcher, and less commonly an actual

audience of one or more children watched and might even respond similar to an audience. My students observed youngsters pretending to be airplanes, acting out a scene from a movie, pretending to carry a baby, conducting an imaginary symphony, making animal sounds, pretending to be an animal such as a dog or a monkey, and telling stories to those around them. Acting rituals may, like athletics/sports rituals, reflect the anticipation of being an actor some day. They may also be an attempt to entertain peers, or be a rehearsal for entertaining peers. They might, like other rituals, fall within the category of reactive behavior to the researcher or camera; a colleague who teaches television courses tells me that even adults often act in silly ways in front of a camera. Or, like athletic/sports rituals, acting may reflect the child's need for recess.

Conclusion

The rituals of children are one expression of spirituality. The wide variety of ritualistic expressions at a public school reflects the individualized nature of spirituality, yet at the same time there are continuities across these expressions, such as similar or identical points of reference for transcendence, and relatively stable expressions as seen in ceremonial activities of the hallway.

An adequate theory of children's spirituality needs to take into account the distinctives as well as important continuities of children's experiences and expressions of spirituality. Distinctive patterns may be related to a wide variety of variables, including gender, ethnicity, region, locale (rural vs. urban vs. suburban), context (school vs. home vs. church), faith or world-view orientation, and personality. Yet the many commonalities that have been discovered across these varying situations affirm Hay and Nye's assertion that spirituality is inborn, an inherent aspect of being human. If this is the case, then the child development textbooks have overlooked an important, perhaps one of the most important, aspects of childhood; the spirituality of children.

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